MOVING ON

BY BOB

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By Alba Pratalia

Bob—once a trembling, needle-fearing boy mocked by white-coated sadists with diplomas—has grown. Not just in age or girth, but in that sweet, dark kernel of righteous wrath. And now? Now he's got them.

All of them.

The pediatric nurse with the syrupy voice who whispered "you won't even feel it" right before jabbing him like a steak at a backyard barbecue.
The school physician who chuckled, "Big boy crying over a tiny prick?" The burly ER medic who said "Man up," like masculinity is measured in pints of blood drained without consent.

They're all here.
In shackles.
Sterile room. Cold steel. Dim light. No anesthetic. Just Bob... and a cart. A cart with wheels that squeak like the memory of every syringe they told him "was nothing."

Dr. Patel flinches instinctively, but there's nowhere to go. Shackles rattle, cold metal biting into his wrists and ankles as Bob steps forward—calm, almost gentle.

In one hand: a simple, humble hypodermic needle. The kind used for flu shots. The kind Dr. Patel once jabbed into Bob's arm while saying, "Just a little pinch, champ."

Bob smiles, that slow, crooked smile forged in decades of suppressed agony and medical gaslighting.

“Such a small needle, doctor,” he whispers, holding it up to the flickering light. “You won’t even feel it.”

And then—stab.

Into Patel’s thigh.

Again. And again. And again.

Stabstabstabstabstabstab—like a sewing machine powered by vengeance. The needle flexes, bends, but doesn't break. Because Bob chose well. He *researched*. He brought the *good ones*.

Each stab is a syllable in his silent poem:

YOU.
SAID.
IT.
WASN’T.
PAIN.

Patel screams. Of course he does. Because it *is* pain. Real. Sharp. *Valid*.

But Bob doesn’t hear the scream.

He only hears a kid’s voice, echoing through his head.

“But it hurts, Mom.”

“Oh come on, Bobby. Don’t be dramatic.”

Stab.
Stab.
Stab.

Bob nods slowly.

“Not dramatic. Just thorough.”

Nurse Jenny is already sobbing before he even gets to her. Because she remembers. Oh yes, she remembers the Tine test—the medieval thumbtack contraption disguised as a “quick check for tuberculosis.” She remembers Bob. Chubby cheeks, terrified eyes, arm yanked down as she chirped in her daycare voice:

“Oh, why cry? It’s just a little pointy stamp! You barely feel it!”

Now she watches Bob approach. Whistling. Cheerful. The same way she once did.

He holds up the Tine tester. Freshly sterilized. Gleaming. Glorious. Ready.

He puts on a falsetto mockery of her voice:
“Oh, why cry? It’s just a little pointy stamp!”

And with a flourish, he presses it onto her inner arm.

CLICK.

Jenny gasps.

Then Bob starts to **drag** it.

Slowly.
Deliberately.
Like carving initials into a park bench made of screaming flesh.

The tiny metal points catch skin, tear muscle, resist like piano wire snapping under strain. Blood wells up. Her skin blooms open like red paper flowers. She *screams*.

And Bob?

Bob twirls.

He pirouettes.

He sings, light and happy, almost Broadway:

🎵 "Just a stamp, just a stamp, why cry?" 🎵

He claps to the rhythm of her sobbing, a syncopated percussion of **regret**.

She begs for mercy. Of course she does.

But Bob only shrugs, head cocked, and gently says:

"Oh Jenny, darling—don't be dramatic."
Then he taps her nose.
"It's just a test."

Last, the male nurse. Muscles, stubble, a voice soaked in gym locker testosterone and expired empathy.

Bob remembers *that* day.

He was grown. Employed. Respectable. Married to the kindest woman to ever walk into his world. His hand shook in hers. His breath came in gasps. His whole body rebelled against the idea of a vein being invaded. A lifetime of terror surged through his skin.

And the nurse? That beacon of professional care?

He chuckled. Rolled his eyes.

"Oh man up. Grow a pair."

Bob never forgot that.

Now, that nurse is shackled to a chair reinforced with bolts. It used to be an IKEA office chair, but Bob added steel plating and trauma-grade restraints. Functional. Symbolic.

Bob appears in front of him. Calm. Precise.

In one hand: a **blood drawing needle**, long and hollow, like a mosquito engineered by Satan.

In the other: a **hand drill**.

He slides the needle into the mandrel—clicks it in.

Then selects:

Spin.
And hammer.

The drill *whirrs* to life. A hungry, mechanical growl. The kind of sound you hear in horror movies, right before a character learns how many liters of blood are inside the human body.

Bob doesn't smile. He doesn't need to. Vengeance isn't joy. It's math.

And the nurse?

Begging. Crying. Promising reform.

"Please, I was just—"

WHRRR-CHUNK.

The first plunge is into the thigh. Flesh parts, blood sprays in arterial arcs, and the drill bucks like a beast. Then the belly. Then the chest. Swiss cheese, horror edition.

The man screams like an animal.

But Bob leans in close and roars over the carnage:

"MAN UP!"
"GROW A PAIR!"
"BE A MAN, MOTHERFUCKER!"

Then he pauses, just a moment. Pulls the drill away. Leans in, as blood bubbles from the man's lips.

And whispers, almost tenderly:

"It's just a little prick."

The doorbell rings.

Ding-dong.

Bob's bloodstained apron flaps slightly as he turns, humming a cheerful, off-key tune. Something from a children's show, probably. Whistling, he wipes his hands on a towel soaked through with righteous history.

He opens the door.

Standing there is Dr. Karen Elmsley—trauma therapist, breathing yoga evangelist, and firm believer in "inner child work."

She smiles, clipboard in hand.
"You called me, Bob?"

Bob beams. Not the manic grin of a man unhinged—no. The serene, satisfied smile of a man who's finally redecorated his inner hell and put up curtains.

"Come in," he says warmly. "I want to show you something."

She follows.

And sees it.

The *torture chamber*.

White walls now Jackson Pollock'd in crimson. The gurneys. The trays. The wailing. Every single medical face from Bob's past, still breathing, still begging, surrounded by the instruments they once said "won't even hurt."

Dr. Elmsley gasps.

Hands to mouth. Voice trembling:

"Bob... what have you done?"

Bob turns to her, eyes wide and earnest.
"Exactly what you told me."
"I processed my trauma."

He spreads his arms proudly. "Exposure therapy. Inner child. Somatic release. All the stuff in the workbook."

Then footsteps. Heels clicking. Bob's wife enters.

Hair perfect. Dress immaculate. Unbothered by the blood-mist in the air. She walks over to the **male nurse**, who now curls into himself, sobbing and repeating some half-finished Our Father.

She leans in close.

“Nice to meet you again.”
She straightens, takes Bob’s hand, and with a nod to the dumbfounded therapist, walks with him toward the door.

The sun is setting.

Warm golden light cuts through the horror like honey over a battlefield.

They walk, hand in hand, silhouetted.

Peaceful.
Whole.
Together.

And somewhere behind them, the male nurse shrieks again as a drill spins up.

But Bob doesn't look back.

He’s moving on.

Review by “Timmy, Age 9, Probably Scarred for Life”

Okay so first of all, I did *not* think this was gonna be a book about me, but it is. Bob is me. Bob is future me. Bob is what happens when grown-ups lie and say, “It’s just a pinch!” but then you feel your soul leave your body through your elbow.

The part with the nurse and the pokey circle stamp? That's real. That's happened to me. They call it a "tine test," but it's actually a medieval trap from hell and Nurse Jenny knows it. Bob knew it too. And he didn't forget. He *brought it back*. Like Batman, but instead of gadgets, he uses... revenge.

There's a lot of blood in this story. Like, a *lot*. Like, don't read this before bed unless you want to dream about someone tap dancing in a puddle of doctor juice. But honestly? Worth it. Because it felt *good* to see someone finally say, "Hey! That hurt, you lying stethoscope-wearing psychopath!"

The only part I didn't like is the drill. I'm scared of drills. And needles. And blood. And hospitals. But I still loved the story. So that means it's really, *really* good.

Also I'm now slightly worried about my future.

Final thoughts:
Justice is when the doctor says, "You won't feel a thing," and then he does.
Bob is my hero.
Please don't tell my mom I read this.

PRIVATE LETTER FROM BOB TO TIMMY
(To be burned after reading. Or framed. Your choice.)

Hey there, Champ.

Yeah, I'm talking to *you*. The one with sweaty palms in the waiting room, pretending that cartoon wallpaper makes anything okay. I see you. I *was* you. The breath-holding, sleeve-rolling, eye-watering kid surrounded by white coats and betrayal.

And I want you to know something:

You're not crazy.
It *does* hurt.
And they *do* lie.

But guess what?

One day, you'll grow up.
And maybe—just maybe—you'll get to write your own kind of justice. With pens. Or scalpels. Or legally ambiguous industrial tools.

So here's my little gift to you, Timmy. I call it **The Boom**.

The next time one of those smug injection wizards leans in with the classic:
"Don't worry, sweetheart. You won't even feel it..."

You look them square in the eye and say:
"Then make REALLY sure I don't. Not a pinch. Not a prick. A NOTHING. Or this book—yeah, *this* one—is what's coming to you."

Hand them a copy. Hardcover. Blood-splattered optional.

Let them *read* the consequences.
Let them *imagine* the drill.
Let them *feel* the tiny stamp of destiny pressing into their soul.

You're not weak.
You're *loading*.
One drop of righteous rage at a time.

And when the day comes—you'll get 'em too, Champ.

Warmest regards,
Bob
(Needle Avenger, Trauma Alchemist, Justice Enthusiast)

P.S. Wear gloves. Blood is surprisingly slippery.

The Grapejuicevine: A Rebellion Begins

They thought kids couldn't organize.
They thought "fear of needles" was a phase.
They thought wrong.

The book—*Bob's Book*—slipped through playgrounds like a contraband gospel in 17th-century France. Whispered behind jungle gyms. Hidden under cafeteria trays. Tucked between picture books in pediatric waiting rooms like a time bomb wrapped in cardboard and trauma.

No school could ban it.
No parent could find it in time.
No doctor could un-read it once handed over with trembling fingers by a kindergartner whispering:
“Page 12. Memorize it. Drill included.”

Suddenly, children everywhere *knew*.

They were *right* all along.
It *does* hurt.
And the adults lied.

No more “be a big boy.”
No more “just a tiny poke.”
No more gaslighting with lollipops and cartoon Band-Aids.

Now, each needle was a gamble.
Each vaccination a potential war crime in the making.

Kids didn’t scream anymore.
They stared.
Cold. Silent. Knowing.
And before the nurse even reached for the alcohol swab, the child would calmly slide a copy of *Moving On* across the table and say:

“Make this a nothing. Not a pinch. Not a prick. A nothing. Or I grow up into a husband with power tools.”

From Tokyo to Topeka, from Nairobi to Naples, pediatricians began sweating.

Waiting rooms grew quieter, heavier.
And somewhere, in a supply closet dimly lit by the flicker of a fluorescent bulb, a nurse trembled as she read the final line of Bob's letter:

"You're not weak. You're loading."

A movement had begun.
They called it **The Prick Pact**.
One oath. One threat. One destiny.

The Age of Innocence was over.
This was the Age of Anticipated Vengeance.

And then—unbelievably—it happened.

Medicine changed.

Not because of a new law.
Not because of an ethics board.
Not because some tearful doctor finally read *Moving On* and saw the light.

But because they were scared.
Of **kids**.

Because Timmy, Sarah, Amir, and Li Wei had *read the book*.
And they all had unblinking eye contact and a parent-funded Amazon wishlist with a cordless DeWalt.

And the grapevine had teeth.

Suddenly, clinics couldn't risk it. The quiet ones were the worst. The calm children. The ones who sat still, no tears, no fuss, no protest. Just a small smile and a copy of Bob's book in their Hello Kitty backpack.

That wasn't a kid. That was a *loaded future*.

And so—almost overnight—modern medicine remembered something curious:

They've **had** the tech.
All along.

- Local anesthetic sprays that **actually** numb.
- Painless injectors that don't look like something you'd use on cattle.
- Micro-needles.
- Sonic diffusers.
- That cold gas thing they use on warts but somehow "wasn't practical for vaccines."

Suddenly it was practical.
Very practical.
It was either that or end up on the receiving end of a drill-powered art installation at age 67.

So they rolled it out.
Every clinic. Every hospital. Every school nurse's drawer.
Even *dentists* got in line.

They began to ask permission.
They explained.
They offered options.

No more "Just a little pinch, champ."
Now it was:
"We have four numbing options, and here's a chart of what you'll actually feel."

Parents wept.
Doctors complied.
Kids nodded, arms outstretched like royalty accepting tribute.

And in the quiet corners of playgrounds, copies of *Moving On* were still passed around—not out of need anymore, but as scripture. As history. As a warning.

Because every child now knew the truth:

It never had to hurt.

They just didn't care.

Until the kids made them.

And oh—how the needlephobic adults *rose*.

Not all adults, of course. The vast majority still muttered things like,
"Well *I* turned out fine,"

while rubbing the nerve-damaged scar tissue from the 1996 tetanus drive.

But *some* adults—ah, yes.
The truthers.
The ones who had *never* forgiven.
Who never once bought the "just a little prick" propaganda.
Who, even as grown-ups, still needed three deep breaths and a bathroom exit plan whenever needles were mentioned.

They'd carried their phobia in silence.
Mocked. Ridiculed.
Told they were babies, sissies, drama queens.
Some had wedding rings, jobs, and mortgage payments—and still had to lie about "fainting at the sight of blood" to avoid the judgment that came from simply being *right*.

They never betrayed their inner child.
They never *complied*.
They watched, horrified, as friends lined up—*voluntarily*—for jabs and blood drives, sipping juice boxes like nothing was wrong.
Like there was no *historical trauma* coded into every latex glove.
They were the *underground resistance*.
Lonely. Quiet. Mocked.

But then—
The children won.

And the adults?

They came out of hiding.
From HR offices, from tech startups, from art collectives and sandwich shops.
They came in trench coats and fuzzy sweaters, eyes wide, rolling up sleeves for the *first time ever* without shaking.

They paraded in schools, clinics, TED Talks.

"These children," they said through tears,
"have done what we never could. They made them *listen*."

Marches were held.
Signs read:

- "I WAS BOB BEFORE BOB."
- "I BELIEVED THE PAIN."
- "NO MORE LYING NEEDLES."

And doctors—well, the smart ones—applauded too.
Not out of guilt, not quite.
But because business was booming and nobody was crying on their shoes anymore.

A movement was born.
The **P.A.I.N. Alliance**:
People Against Injections iNvoluntarily
(They worked backward from the acronym, like all good resistance groups.)

And on Bob Day—now an internationally recognized commemorative event—everyone who ever feared the jab stood proud and declared:

"Not dramatic. Just thorough."

And the kids?
They just nodded, ancient in their eyes, and whispered:
"You're welcome."

Bob's identity, of course, was never confirmed.

No arrest.
No interview.
No TEDx talk in a bloodstained apron.

Just whispers. Legends.
And a steadily growing shelf of underground reprints translated into 89 languages, including Esperanto and ASL.

Some said he was a disgraced anesthesiologist.
Others claimed he was a children's author gone rogue.
One persistent theory argued Bob was actually three raccoons in a trench coat with severe medical trauma and access to a drill.

But the most poetic theory—the one passed between child psychologists in hushed, candlelit gatherings—was that Bob... **never existed**.

That **Bob is a sound**.

A sound burned into the brain of every child whose innocence was punctured by latex treachery.

BOB.

The noise your mind makes—balloon-pop, cortex-twitch, cartoon mallet to the amygdala—
the moment the nurse smiles and lies:
"You'll feel a little prick."

BOB.
Your neurons scream:
"Prick?? What prick?? I don't want a prick! Where's the prick? Why the prick? WHY??"

It's not a name.
It's not a man.

It's a **flashpoint**.
The exact microsecond when trust fractures, and your brain realizes adults are just taller con artists with degrees and needles.

BOB is every child.
BOB is every adult who never stopped being that child.
BOB is the silent scream, the inner slam of the skull door shutting as you mutter:
"Never again. One day, they'll pay."

And now, they have.

So maybe there is no Bob.
But we all remember that sound.
That first betrayal.
That first *BOB.*

And we never forget it.

RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

An old man in a battered armchair. The upholstery is threadbare, but the shape of him is molded into the cushion—like a fossil of defiance. Light filters in through lace curtains. Afternoon dust drifts like memory.

In his lap: a freshly printed copy of *Moving On*. Still smells of glue and revolution. The cover gleams slightly, incongruous with the ancient hands trembling to hold it.

This is a man who's never had blood drawn.
Turned down jobs—*good* jobs—because they required tests.
Never visited his dream, the Okavango Delta, because "immunizations required."
Limped half his life from a correctable injury, just to avoid a scalpel.

Not fear.
Conviction.

He wipes his eyes with that always-there grandpa handkerchief—the one that once held candy, coins, and quiet dignity.

A small voice from the hallway:
“Grandpa? What’s wrong?”

He doesn’t answer right away.

The lump in his throat is the weight of decades. Mockery. Gaslighting. “Grow up.” “Be a man.” “It’s just a little prick.”
All of it—burning away in the warmth of vindication.

Finally, voice cracked but steady:

“I was right all along...”

He doesn’t need to say more.
He just closes the book.
And smiles like the war is over.

"It's just a little pinch, champ."

They said that. And they lied. Every white coat, every smug smile, every adult who thought a cartoon Band-Aid could patch over trauma.

Meet **Bob**—once a trembling boy betrayed by the syringe-wielding sadists of pediatric medicine. Now? He's all grown up. Calm. Calculated. Carrying a cart of carefully selected retribution. And a drill.

Alba Pratalia's *Moving On* is a darkly hilarious, blood-spattered opera of vengeance and validation—a fever dream for anyone who ever flinched in a waiting room and was told to "man up." With poetic violence, surgical sarcasm, and enough repressed rage to power a small nation, Bob gives voice—and steel-tipped justice—to a generation gaslit in the name of healthcare.

Equal parts psychological horror, satirical manifesto, and bedtime story for the needle-phobic, this book is not for the faint of heart. It's for the brokenhearted. The betrayed. The ones who *remember.*

So come for the trauma. Stay for the Tine test revenge aria. And by the end, you too will understand:

It never had to hurt. They just didn't care. Until now.

"Not dramatic. Just thorough."